



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lava Beds
National Monument

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Lava Beds National Monument News Release

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Mystery and Change at Fleener's Chimneys

TULELAKE, California— Early Lava Beds explorer J.D. Howard visited and named Fleener's Chimneys on his first visit in 1916. Ninety eight years ago, what would become Lava Beds National Monument was a very different place; at least underground. Famous for its lava tube caves, Lava Beds is protected by the National Park Service so it will remain untouched for future generations. Nature, however, never stops changing the landscape.

Howard climbed into Fleener's Chimneys and explored its passages. He left his telltale mark; white paint on the black lava rock with the date. Over time, the National Park Service realized things were changing when the chimneys began to fill up. Visitors had thrown hundreds of pounds of debris into the holes, so in 1992 a gate and sign were installed to protect the chimneys and visitors from the hazardous conditions underground. In 1994, the chimneys were excavated and explored once more. It was like uncovering history. The passages once walked by Howard were again accessible by trained researchers and new features were noted.

This spring, the National Park Service visited Fleener's Chimneys to see what changes had occurred over the last 20 years. Two members of the trained crew of four rappelled into the chimney, expecting to find Howard's sign and passages, when they hit a loose pile of rocks. The chimney was once again blocked by debris, but this appeared different than 1994. This appears to have been a natural breakdown of loose rock within the passage. J.D. Howard's experiences are locked up tight underground, once again unvisitable.

Between the two chimneys explored, the park staff did extract about three pounds of trash that had found its way from visitor's hands into the chimneys. Humans have a dramatic effect on the landscape. Nature, however, never stops changing. There are hundreds of caves of all shapes and sizes throughout Lava Beds National Monument's 46,560 acres. Some of their secrets are locked

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up and some are being shared with visitors daily. Each visit can be different and each scientific expedition can reveal new places; or places locked up forever.

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Lava Beds National Monument, established in 1925, is a land of turmoil, both geologic and historic. Over the last half-million years, volcanic eruptions have created a rugged landscape dotted with diverse volcanic features. Lava tube caves, Native American sites, historic battlefields and a high desert wilderness experience await you!

For more information about visiting Lava Beds National Monument, call 530-667-8100, email labe_interpretation@nps.gov, or go to www.nps.gov/labe.

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